



A HISTORIGRAPHICAL STUDY ON THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENT OF PROF. NABIN KUMAR SAHU

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ABSTRACT

History has its lingering presence on all aspects of human life be it science or society. It is the historian who brings to light, the hidden aspects of human past through his great works. By his valuable works, he leaves an imprint in the annals of history. In this research article, attempts have been made to focus the life and works of Nabin Kumar Sahu who made several revisions and additions in the history of Odisha and left an ineradicable mark in the historiography of Odishha. N.K. Sahu was a prolific author who wrote about ancient Indian history and Odisha's history. N.K. Sahu had joined as a professor and department head at Sambalpur University shortly after the P.G. Department of History was established in 1969. On November 19, 1979, as a result of his rising popularity, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University. To conclude N. K. Sahu was genuinely humble. He spent his entire life conducting study, and as a result, he helped to shape Odishan historiography. He was one of the most renowned historians in Odisha, and both Odishan and Indian academics were known with his expert historical publications and all-encompassing friendship.

KEY WORDS: *Historiography, Museum, Hinayana, Mahayana, Tantrayana, Buddhism, monasteries, archaeological, excavation, etc.*

INTRODUCTION

History has its lingering presence on all aspects of human life be it science or society. It is the historian who brings to light, the hidden aspects of human past through his great works. By his valuable works, he leaves an imprint in the annals of history.¹ What Anthony Trollope says: "The desire is common to all readers to know not only what a great writer has written but also of what nature has been the man who has produced such great work."² Thus it is necessary to prefix a biography to a general criticism of the immense works Professor N.K. Sahu has done for the reconstruction of history and culture of India in general and Odisha in particular.

In the 1940s and 1950s, there were great historians like Paramananda Acharya, Prabhat Mukherji, Kedarnath Mahapatra, Krishna Chandra Panigrahi and Nabin Kumar Sahu in Odisha, etc..

These historians followed a new approach in their study of history of Odisha. They attempted to vocalize the long silence in the past of Odisha by an analytical assessment of the records and traditional accounts.³ Hence, in this research article, attempts have been made to focus the life and works of Nabin Kumar Sahu who made several revisions and additions in the history of Odisha and left an ineradicable mark in the historiography of Odisha.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION OF NABIN KUMAR SAHU

This great historian of Odisha N.K. Sahu was born on 28th July, 1922 at Barapali village of Baragarh District.⁴ His father Suru Sahu had a small confectionery and his mother Sebati Devi was a house wife. He was also adopted by his uncle Ghasiram Sahu (elder brother of Suru Sahu) and his wife Satybhama Devi.⁵ In spite of that due to utter poverty in his family, Nabin was a helping hand to his father's shop during the childhood days.⁶

Barpali was a former feudal estate of Baliar Singh, the fifth Raja of Sambalpur, who assigned it as a maintenance grant to his second son Bikram Singh and it was Bikram Singh who established Chauhan Zamindari at Barpali.⁷ His birth place i.e. Barpali, has also an aesthetic significance as it has important two temples (1) Maa Samaleswari temple, and (2) Jagannath temple. The former was built by Bikram Singh and the later was built by Hrudaya Sai, the son of Bikram Singh. While the Lord Jagannath Temple resembles the Odishan style of temple of temple architecture, the design of the Samaleswari Temple displays the typical Chauhan style.⁸ The fairs and festivals along with the coming of the saints to the Barpali village had influenced and shaped the ideas, thoughts and knowledge of N.K. Sahu in his future life. His village Barpali is also famous for being the birth place of the prominent Odia Poet Gangdhar Meher, industrialist Padmashri Krutartha Acharya, eminent scientist Padmashree Parsuram Mishra, educationist Ghanashyam Das and freedom fighter Bhagirathi Pattnaik. In November 1926, he and his elder brother Birabar Sahu had recovered from small pox, a fatal disease at that time.

Despite the acute poverty in his family, he started the pre-primary education in the village *Chatshali* under the guidance of Sadashiv Behera, the *Chatsali* teacher of Barpali village. He learnt the Odia letters, alphabets, Basic mathematics, Odia Varnabodha, Koili Malika, Gopibhasa and the Odia Sri Mad Bhagavata written by Jagannath Das, etc. in the *Chatshali*. After completion of pre-primary education, he was admitted to the village primary school. In spite of being a brilliant student in his childhood days, he could not get the scholarships in Class-III, V and VII due to the wrong entry into the admission register of his date of birth and instead of 28.07.1922, 22.08.1920 by Madhusudan Mishra, the Head Master of that Primary school. It is heard that Madhusudan Mishra knowingly made this mistake to deprive him from the scholarship as Nabin belonged to the residential area of Chauhan Zamindari. However, this part of the deceit was known to J.K. Sahu, brother of N.K. Sahu and Nabin was not aware of this incidence. He finished his Class-IV to VII education from Barpali Middle English School and was deeply influenced by the then Headmaster Gokulananda Bhuyan and Asst. Teacher Pandit Raghav Mishra. After that Nabin was admitted into the Prithviraj High School of Bolangir. His maternal uncle provided all kinds of help to him for his higher education.⁹

During this crucial period of his time, while studying in matriculation he got married to Saraswati the daughter of Bajaranga Sahu of Sonapur. But the determined Nabin due to his hard work got first class in matriculation in 1940 by breaking the 25 years record of his school. He was also awarded the Patna Maharaja Gold Medal for being the topper in his school.¹⁰

After completion of his matriculation, Sahu took admission in the Cuttack C.T. Training School and successfully completed his two years teacher's training course. Without delay he joined as a teacher in 1943 in Bargarh George High School. He served there only for one year in order to set up a High School in his locality. Nabin's dream came true and Barpali High School was established in July 1944. Now he was transferred to Barpali High School as an Asst. Teacher and own popularity for his behavior and teaching. He was not happy with his Asst. Teacher job rather he looked upon for higher studies and higher jobs. While doing his teachership job in Barpali High School, he completed Intermediate (I.A.) as a private student with second division. In order to pursue his higher education, he had saved some money during his teaching job in the Barpali High School.

A new turn came in his life, when he got admitted into B.A. History (Hons) in the Department of History, Ravenshaw College, Cuttack in 1945. At that time, Prof. Ghanashyam Das was the Head of the Department of History who shaped his life during graduation. As a student Sahu was meticulous, research based and dedicated in his work and study. He persuaded Prof. Ghanashaym Das, Head of the Department of History, Ravenshaw College to establish a museum in Ravenshaw college campus which was before a muslim hostel. Later it was changed to P.G. Department of Botany.¹² This museum established by Prof. Ghanashayam Das and his student N.K. Sahu became the forerunner of Odisha State Museum. Commenting on this museum, Prof. Sri Ram Das once said, "The museum set up by Ghanashyam Das and N.K.Sahu was the precursor of the Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar ". This knowledge about the museum helped him a lot to establish a new museum at Sambalpur University later. Anyway, he passed his graduation in 1947(the independence year of India) with first class first in History (Hons.) with distinction. From 1948 to 1950 N. K. Sahu first appeared as a historian in Odisha for his narratives in the Odia journals like *Sahakara* and *Naba Bharata*.¹³

After his graduation, there was no such good scope for further study in Odisha. His teacher Prof. Ghanashyam Das suggested him to continue his higher education in Allahabad university. He took P.G. admission there in History.¹⁴ In spite of all the financial, psychological and family problems, he completed his Post-graduation in 1949 from Allahabad University. In 1948, when he was a student of History in MA class in Allahabad University, he presented a general study entitled *Prachina Bharatare Ganatantra Shasana*(Democracy in Ancient India) in *Sahakara*.¹⁵

HIS PROFESSIONAL CAREER

In 1949 N.K. Sahu began his professional career in Christ College as Lecturer in History. As a teacher, Nabin took keen interest in the studies of his students and he had more concern and compassion for them. In the same year Government of Odisha also appointed him as Deputy Collector of Angul but he refused to join, rather personally requested the then Chief Minister, Dr. H.K. Mahatab to provide a Lecturer post in a government college of Odisha. Dr.Mahatab took prompt action and instructed the D.P.I. to do the needful but Nabin had to wait for one year to get the job. Sahu got the job in 1950 and joined as a Lecturer in history in Maharaja Purna Chandra College, Baripada. During this time he carried on his Ph.D. work in the Utkal University on the topic 'Buddhism in Orissa' under the supervision of Dr. Nalinaksha Dutta and was awarded Ph.D. from Utkal University in 1955.¹⁶

While at Christ College, he had a resourceful discussion regarding the history and culture of Odisha with Radhamohan Gadnayak, a student at that time. When he was in M.P.C. College as a Lecturer, he got an award from the Government of India for his essay on "Yuge Yuge Bharatiya

Noubanijya(History of Indian Maritime trade through ages)” which made him a prominent research scholar in Odisha.¹⁷

On the initiative of Ghanashyam Das, the then D.P.I. of Odisha, Nabin Kumar was transferred to Ravenshaw College in August 1954. From 1958 to 1960, he served as Ravenshaw College's administrative bursar.¹⁸ While working for Ravenshaw College, he associated himself with the quarterly Orissa Historical Research Journal which is published by the Odisha State Museum,. He frequently submitted papers to this OHRJ, and in 1958, the Editorial Board accepted him as a member of this journal. He served as the Chief Editor of the Orissa Historical Research Journal for a while. Teachers and students at Ravenshaw College highly praised him for his exemplary teaching in ancient Indian history and the history of Odisha.²⁰

AS A RESEARCH FELLOW

Sahu was an active scholar and a prolific writer. He began his research on "Buddhism in Orissa" while employed as a Lecturer at the M.P.C. College, Baripada, and was awarded a Ph.D. in History by the Utkal University in 1958.²¹ It is a significant piece of research. The text has been enhanced by Nalinaksha Dutt's meticulous direction and truthful observations, a professor of Pali at Calcutta University. The book provides information on the expansion and advancement of Buddhism in Odisha as well as a study of Buddhist ruins found around the state. N.K. Sahu has demonstrated his capacity for research in this book by examining the evolution and expansion of Hinayana, Mahayana, and Tantrayana Buddhism in Odisha.²² He received a lot of criticism for this work, but he was able to show via his research that Tantrapitha Uddiyana was actually in Odisha.²³ This book eventually gained a lot of attraction among academics. Odisha Sahitya Academy released an Odia translation of this book, Odishare Boudha Darma, in 1959 in response to the book's rising popularity.

Another unique and priceless book by N.K. Sahu that attempts to offer a detailed account of the history of Odisha from the prehistoric period up till the fifth century A.D. is “The Utkal University History of Orissa, Vol.-I”.²⁴ In this book he has discussed the genealogies and historical timeline of the region's governing dynasties and offers insight on the political and geographic situation of Odisha in the past.²⁵ Although K.C. Panigrahi criticized him for his incorrect writing style, ambiguity, and overly descriptive writing, his work made him well-known throughout India as a writer and scholar.²⁶ In effect, following the publication of this book, the Department of History in various Universities of Odisha introduced regional history (History of Odisha) as a paper in History Honours at the B.A. level. Subsequently, this regional history became a special paper like Ancient Indian History, Medieval Indian History, etc. at the Post-Graduate level.

Another lengthy work by N.K. Sahu is “Kharavela”, in which the author attempts to shed light on the accomplishments and activities of this legendary Kalinga king.²⁷ Kharavela was one of the most notable emperors in ancient India, and he led a colourful life that earned him a high place in history as a conqueror, kind ruler, and patron of the arts and culture. His accomplishments in politics and culture stood out in that distant era of history. On October 29, 1984, during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Odisha State Museum, Smt. Indira Gandhi, the country's then-prime minister, officially launched the book Kharavela by N.K. Sahu. His meticulous investigation served as the foundation for the facts and events depicted in this book, which in large part resolve many contentious questions about the dates and events related to Kharavela's life. Even though N.K. Sahu had extensively discussed Kharavela in his Utkal University History of Orissa (Vol. I, Ch. VI), he made every effort to correct and analyse the art, language, literature, and sculpture of Kalinga in his book

titled Kharavela in order for it to be a useful resource for researchers and historians in the future. He vehemently disagreed with K.C. Panigrahi's and other historians' assertions that Kharavela is a product of the second century A.D. He was able to provide convincing evidence that King Kharavela lived in the first century A.D.

In 1961, the Government of Odisha published a book by N.K. Sahu titled "History of Orissa Police" to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Indian Police in Odisha. This book traces the development and advancement of police administration of India in general and Odisha in particular. The author has made an effort to analyse how law and order have changed over time. A systematic approach to police administration, crime, and punishment from antiquity to the current era has been discussed in this book.

N.K. Sahu's "Veer Surendra Sai" was his last significant work. On August 30, 1985, His Excellency Biswambara Nath Pandey, the then-Governor of Odisha, inaugurated the publication, which was made by the Department of Culture, Government of Odisha. As requested by the Centenary Committee set up by the Government of Odisha for the commemoration of the deceased freedom fighter's death centenary, N.K. Sahu agreed to write a book detailing the life history of Veer Surendra Sai in 1984. The work of N.K. Sahu is exceptional because of his honest effort and research-focused study of every fact and event related to Surendra Sai. Surendra Sai is referred to in this book as the Child of the Odisha Revolution of 1857.³⁰ In this work, the author has made an effort to portray Surendra Sai as an ardent Nationalist and genuine liberation fighter. He made an effort to dispel the myth that Surendra Sai engaged in the war against the British for personal benefit. In order to support Surendra Sai's extraordinary sacrifices for the good of his people, which have few historical precedents, he has provided facts and evidence.³¹ Surendra Sai's unrelenting fight for national self-determination has been praised by N.K. Sahu by comparison to other great nationalist liberation fighters like Rana Pratap and Chhatra Pati Shivaji.

Together with J.K. Sahu and P.K. Mishra, Prof. Sahu wrote the book "History of Orissa".³² The book was initially released in 1980. It is assumed that Professor Sahu contributed chapters on topics like "Prehistory," "Historical Geography," "Early History of Kalinga," "Magadha and Kalinga," "Kalinga after Kharavela," "The Matharas," and "The Nalas and their contemporaries" because he had mastered them and they were reflected in his masterpiece, the Utkal University History of Odisha (UUHO). His numerous articles, which are listed in the Bibliography, have also been covered in his various chapters in other books. His writings on political history, ancient Odisha historical figures, historical geography, and archaeology have been debated in the UUHO. Likewise, his studies and widely read essays on Buddhism, Buddhist art, etc. have been included in his massive work Buddhism in Orissa.

Similar to this, Odia Jatira Itihasa, a work written by Yuge Yuge Bharatiya Nauvanijya,³³ reflects the facts of that man. Additionally, the information on Surendra Sai and the Chauhan dynasty that was published in many journals, papers, and periodicals has been mirrored in Veer Surendra Sai.

Prof. Sahu conducted his research with extreme care. In order to familiarize the readers with the numerous place names, kingdoms, routes, locations of monasteries, etc. that have been provided at the conclusion of the research work, he has included a number of maps in his works. Before going to the places, he produced the nation maps of the excavation. He thought that maps are essential for comprehending historical information. Similar to this, he has projected photographs of various caves, images, tools, etc. to provide readers and researchers with first-hand information and understanding.³⁴ These photographs are connected to this work under the heading

"Photographs." The role of Odisha in the history and culture of India was the subject of N.K. Sahu's dissertation, which earned him a D.Litt degree from Utkal University in 1964. He was unable to publish his D.Litt. thesis because he was so preoccupied with the creation of History of Orissa, Vol. That research paper is not currently accessible. Otherwise, it would have had a greater impact on the society and culture of Odisha.³⁵

AS A RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

One of the serious and committed research supervisors of his era was N.K. Sahu. He was a successful mentor because of his enthusiasm for research and the motivation he provided for research work. Sarat Chandra Behera, a history lecturer at Christ College in Cuttack, was his first research assistant. Under his direction, he studied the Sailodbhava dynasty of Odisha and was given a Ph.D. by Utkal University in 1962. N.K. Sahu was the first history educator in Odisha to successfully mentor a student toward receiving a Ph.D. N.K. Sahu encountered several difficulties in this endeavour, yet he persevered through them. N.K. Sahu had to ask the university authorities to replace K.C.Panigrahi as the examiner for the thesis that his student Sarat Chandra Behera had prepared. The former had made an unfavourable comment on the thesis. Fortunately, Ram Sankar Tripathy, a retired history professor, received the thesis again, and in response to his comment, Sarat Chandra Behera was awarded a Ph.D. Along with S.C. Behera, N.K. Sahu also successfully mentored a number of academics from different fields, including J.K. Sahu, his younger brother, archaeologist Arjun Joshi, Chittaranjan Mishra, Sadhu Charan Panda, and Akhila Panda, all of whom were history teachers. Arjun Satpathy, a Hindi lecturer; Pabitra Mohan Nayak, an English lecturer; A.K. Chakravorthy, a Political Science lecturer; Sradhakar Supakar, a lawyer; Jagannath Das, a bureaucrat and administrator; and Surendra Kumar Moharana, a department of finance official in the Odisha Secretariat, among others. Laxminarayan Sahu's thesis, "Jainism in Orissa," was based on the inspiration of N.K. Sahu.³⁶ N.K. Sahu never harassed or turned away anyone who sought his advice because of his commitment to historical research. In every way, he directed and prodded his research assistants.

HIS POPULAR LITERATURE

N.K. Sahu was a prolific author who wrote about ancient Indian history and Odisha's history.³⁷ He frequently wrote for the Odisha State Museum's Orissa Historical Research Journal. N.K. Sahu deserves praise for publishing two books on the history of Odisha in 1956 and 1957. Andrew Sterling's insightful writings added value to these works. Indian Publishing House, New Delhi, published William Wilson Hunter and John Beams' book in 1980. N.K. Sahu provides a clear description of Odisha's history and culture in the final chapter (Ch. 9) of Volume II, making it beneficial not just for history students but also for general readers.³⁸ In 1958, N.K. Sahu, a lecturer at Ravenshaw College, questioned the veracity of the historical accounts in Madala Panji, the history of Sri Jagannath Temple in Puri, in a widely read Odia newspaper article. He believed that the stone wall built by Markat Keshari was wrong and that the Keshari dynasty had never ruled over Odisha. The Jagannath Temple in Puri was never erected by Anang Bhim Dev, and the legend surrounding Kapilendra Dev's early years was a fabrication. The facts of Madala Panji were regarded as the absolute truth by the people of Odisha. However, N.K. Sahu was the one who was able to reach the people of Odisha through his articles and essays and who also made a splash among the more traditional writers. There was a literary confrontation between Pandit Gouri Kumar Brahma and N.K. Sahu as a result of his protest against the latter. It greatly aided N.K. Sahu in conducting

critical study of several historical facts, and he later gained notoriety throughout Odisha for popularising this region's history. It exemplifies N.K. Sahu's fearlessness and his interest for discovering the truth. N.K. Sahu was named state editor of the Odisha District Gazetteer by the state government of Odisha in 1960,³⁹ and he held the position until 1967. Around the course of these seven years, he travelled all over the state, stopping at significant historical landmarks as well as locations with artistic and cultural significance. He published the Bolangir and Koraput District Gazetteers in 1966 and 1967, respectively, as the State Editor.⁴⁰ Additionally, he started the creation of the Sambalpur District Gazetteer, which was finished by his successor Bhabakrushna Mohanty. N.K. Sahu was an excellent writer who lacked no fear.

He constantly made an effort to write relevant material for the next generation. "Odia Jatira Itihasa," a book he wrote in the Odia language, was first published in 1974 and later reissued in 1977 by the Odisha State Bureau of Text Book Preparation and Production.⁴¹ He provided a detailed analysis of the history and culture of the state of Odisha in this work, which covered the time period from antiquity until the early 12th century A.D. He sheds some very intriguing light on Odisha's marine trade and its connections to other nations like Java, Sumatra, Ceylon, Cambodia, Thailand, etc. But it's regrettable that this book's Parts III and 11 were unable to be published. N.K. Sahoo, a native of Western Odisha, was more interested in promoting the history and culture of this area. He created a plan for Indian authors to write books for the university level as a result, and the UGC approved the release of his book on the history of western Odisha. His brother J.K. Sahu was transferred from Khalikote Evening College to Sambalpur University at Sambalpur University's request for this purpose, and the study work continued. There were two sections to the book. The script was given to the university when Part 1 was finished, but in the interim, N.K. Sahu resigned as vice chancellor of Sambalpur University, and all of his efforts came to nothing. The university administration did not express any interest in seeing that book published.⁴²

Along with J.K. Sahu and P.K. Mishra, N.K. Sahu also co-authored a few books, including +2 World History and History of Orissa, which were published by Nalanda Prakashan, Binod Bihari, Cuttack and earned the hearts of thousands of students and instructors throughout Odisha. Students still like the three authors' book on Orissa history known as History of Orissa.⁴³ N.K. Sahu was given permission by the Department of Culture, Government of Odisha, to publish a Souvenir on Odia Poet Jayadev. The main goal of this literary endeavour was to disprove the repeated claims made by some Bengali scholars that Jayadev belonged to Bengal and instead to Odisha. However, K.C. Panigrahi expressed concern over it and opposed the government's choice to print and publish the memento after N.K. Sahu was named the Chief Editor. However, the memento was sold as soon as it was published, demonstrating the importance of its contributions. Prof. N. K. Sahu deserves all the praise for finishing the job.

Madhusudan Das: The Legislator, published by Pragati Utkala Sangha in 1980, was edited by N.K. Sahu.⁴⁴ N.K. Sahu received a variety of assistance from Prabodha Kumar Mishra throughout the writing of this volume. The idea that the Jagannath culture arrived in Puri via the western coast was first put up by N.K. Sahu.⁴⁵ He believed that the Buddha's relics were the ancestors of the Jagannath Cult. Additionally, he referred to God Jagannatha as Adi-Buddha and that there was no distinction between Sri Jagannath of Puri and the Jagannath of Indrabhuti.⁴⁶ N.K. Sahu was a big supporter of the Mahima Cult and worked hard to make it the official religion of the people of Odisha. He frequently travelled to the Mahima Dharma centres of Joranda and Khaliapalli and spoke with sages of the Mahima cult about Mahima culture. A "Mahima Cult Research Council" was established at his request after he pushed his students and researchers to conduct research on the

Mahima Cult. Bhagirathi Nepak served as the council's secretary, and he served as its president.⁴⁷ He published the Mahima Alok magazine simply to make it well-known among the people of Odisha.

AS THE SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

On January 1st, 1967, the Sambalpur University was established. On January 1, 1968, a year after N.K. Sahu was appointed the university's first registrar. The University's Administrative Block was built with his expert direction and leadership. He was instrumental in the construction of many buildings and the launch of numerous P.G. departments. Initially, there were just 22 colleges affiliated with the university, but this number has since grown largely as a result of N.K. Sahu's initiative. He played a key role in the expansion of higher education in Western Odisha. Because of his genuine enthusiasm, nine departments at Panchayat College in Bargarh received authorization to teach honours courses one year. He oversaw the expansion of post-graduate teaching to areas like odia and political science in 1968, and the creation of P.G. Departments in History, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Life Sciences the following year. In reality, N.K. Sahu was also the creator of The Sambalpur University Journal. At first, it was a single publication that covered both the arts and sciences, but later, two distinct periodicals were made available for students studying the arts and sciences.⁴⁸

HIS CAREER AS A PROFESSOR

N.K. Sahu came as a professor and department head at Sambalpur University shortly after the P.G. Department of History was established in 1969. He remained in that position until the first day of November 1979. He led the Department to make significant advancements. Every week, he used to plan seminars for the Department. For producing research articles and seminar papers, he recommended the students to make extensive use of the Seminar Library and Museum Library. He urged his students to gather ancient epics on palm leaves and other artefacts with historical value. He consistently attended the welcome and departure rituals, as well as the departmental picnics.

On March 4, 1970, Gangadhar Meher College in Sambalpur hosted the Odisha History Congress under the joint-sponsorship of Sambalpur University's P.G. Department of History. The Odisha History Congress was once more conducted by the history department of Sambalpur University in 1978, and N.K. Sahu was given the honour of serving as its president. Dr. Ram Prasad Mishra, the Honourable Finance Minister of Odisha at that time, laid the cornerstone for the University Museum in Sambalpur on March 4, 1978. However, the construction of the projected museum could not begin after his retirement. Within the confines of the History Department, the museum is still in operation. For the establishment of the museum, N.K. Sahu went through a lot of hardship.⁴⁹ Without caring about the public's criticism, he shifted a stone inscription of Emperor Bhanudev-I from Sonapur to the Department museum. He emphasised the significance of a museum for the preservation and dissemination of local culture and history in his presidential address to the Odisha History Congress in 1978. After his passing, the university's administration named this museum the "N.K. Sahu Sambalpur University Museum," however the museum hall has not yet been built.

N.K. Sahu was involved with the university magazine "Saptarshi," which began publication in 1972. N.K. Sahu served as the publication's editor. Differences then arose, and Saptarshi vanished into obscurity. The P.G. Department of History thereafter began publishing a research journal titled New Aspects of History of Orissa in 1971 at his request. A study of the History of South Kosala, an

article by Professor Sahu that was included in this initial edition, gave a new perspective on the significance of Kosala. N.K. Sahu contributed an article titled "University Museum - its Bearing on the History of Orissa" for the second edition of this issue, which was published in 1978, to emphasise the importance of a museum for university-level studies. He desired for Sambalpur University to establish a brand-new Department of Indian Culture. He considered the Pali and Sanskrit scripts, numismatics, art and sculpture, religion, and philosophy of diverse locations when creating the department's course syllabus. N.K. Sahu headed both the Department of History and the Department of Indian Culture when the Department of Culture was established in 1978.⁵⁰ Additionally, he suggested expanding the teaching of Indian culture at the +2 level at affiliated colleges. The dream of N.K. Sahu was not realised after his retirement since the department of culture was included into the P.G. Department of History.

SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY'S VICE CHANCELLOR

N.K. Sahu had a religious dream while serving as registrar, and he toiled tirelessly for the advancement of the University. He sought to gain the trust of students, instructors, and staff when he was hired as the professor in the P.G. Department of History. He participated in practically every University activity. He was a member of the syndicate, a successful warden, the director of the employment bureau, and the coordinator of several P.G. departments. On November 19, 1979, as a result of his rising popularity, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University. He was committed to the University and made sacrifices for it. Everyone adored him, and he was clean of corruption. Unfortunately, he did not do well as Vice-Chancellor. He was a man with a liberal outlook on life, and some of his friends took advantage of his honesty to plot behind him. They frequently wrote anonymous letters to the Chief Minister and Education Secretary criticising N.K. Sahu.⁵¹ They were familiar with him. As a result, Janaki Ballav Pattnaik, the then-chief minister of Odisha, issued a directive directing the state government to assume control of the university's management. On May 12, 1981, he was relieved of his duties as vice chancellor of Sambalpur University, and Dr. Srinibas Sahu assumed leadership. Others may have seen N.K. Sahu's loss as a defeat, but he actually found new life that day.⁵²

PROFESSOR SAHU'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

Professor Sahu's contributions to the field of archaeological digs in various regions of Odisha as an archaeologist are significant. Since his time as a student in 1947–1948, he has travelled to Kausambi in Uttar Pradesh and Sishupalgarh close to Bhubaneswar to study more about archaeological digs. In 1956–1957, he worked as an instructor at Ravenshaw College and took part in the excavations at Jaugarh and Bhuasuni Hill. N.K. Sahu played a key role in the archaeological excavation of Asurgarh in the Kalahandi district after being appointed as a professor in the P.G. Department of History at Sambalpur University.⁵³ The Department of Culture of the Government of Odisha collaborated with Sambalpur University on this excavation. It lasted for a month and unearthed arte facts dating from the third to the fifth centuries B.C. Around 30 rusted iron tools, carnelian beads, and a portion of the Muchalinda Buddha monastery covering an area of 1.5 acres were found during N.K. Sahu's 1978-led archaeological excavation in the Ganiapalli area, which is 10 km from the Melchhamunda area in the District of Bargarh in the Ang Valley. Two life-size Muchalinda Buddha sculptures composed of the bluish chlorite stone were found during this dig, which was directed by N.K. Sahu.⁵⁴ The iconography of each figure, which features a snake canopy over the head with five hoods, points to the 5th century A.D. as the time era for these icons. When

he visited the Monastery Parimalgiri in the seventh century A.D., the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang made no note of it. Prof. Sahu assumed that the pilgrim had no opportunity to visit the monastery because he was travelling to South Kosala's city. Such a monastery, according to N.K. Sahu, was uncommon in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. But he believed that in order for Ganiapalli Hill to gain a prestigious place in the history of Buddhist Culture, the construction needed to be properly studied and researched.

Additionally, he had found ancient civilisation ruins in Asurgarh, a region close to Sonapur.⁵⁴ When he was the vice chancellor of Sambalpur University, he co-led an additional archaeological dig in search of Lanka, which in his opinion is not the island of Ceylon but rather a fortified city in the middle or on the bank of the river, with H.D. Sankhalaria of Pune University. According to H.D. Sankhalaria, Ravana most likely belonged to the Gond tribe, and his Lanka was in the Chhot Nagpur Plateau in East M.P.⁴⁹ During the excavations by Sonapur, it was not possible to demonstrate that there was any evidence linking the location to the capital of Lanka in the Ramayana. The goal of Professor Sahu, to locate Lanka near Sonapur, has not been proven to be accurate. Further research appears to be necessary on the question of whether any portion of the Godavari Valley or the Mahanadi Valley can be associated with Lanka. Over time, H.D. Sankhalaria abandoned the project and N.K. Sahu departed from his position, leaving the project open-ended.

When N.K. Sahu was an advisor for the Department of Archaeology, he began excavation work in the Maraguda Valley near Khariar in the district of Kalahandi.⁵⁵ The Prince of Khariar, Jita Mitra Singhdeo, assisted him in this work. N.K. Sahu found a Nanda dynasty Saktipitha during the excavation.⁵⁶ According to his comments, Maraguda was a prosperous city in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. He connected the location with Sarabhapura, the South Kosala capital. He also found a fort on the river Jonk called Jumalgarh, which has a 'U'-shaped border around it. Near the fort, there is a sizable tank named Raital Sagar, which is protected by a natural embankment and spans roughly 15 acres of land. Jumalgarh Fort is most likely a later name for Surabhapura, the South Kosala region's capital.⁵⁷

N.K. Sahu has uncovered several mounds from the Maraguda excavation that contain significant artefacts and Jaina sculptures from the seventh and eighth centuries. Along with a royal clay seal of Maharaja Nannaraja of the Pandu dynasty that had been given to Sambalpur University by B.R. Yadav of the Maraguda Valley, he also discovered a number of iron clamps that had been used to build stone structures in the Maraguda valley during the mediaeval period. Additionally, N.K. Sahu has uncovered a few Sarabhapuriya artefacts. He also collected several Hero Stones commemorating the deaths of warriors and the performing of Sati rites by their widowed wives, two large Lion pictures, a headless warrior riding a horse, a little Ganesh, and several other warriors. Sonapur has been adamantly asserted by N.K. Sahu to be the Lanka of the Ramayana era. He demonstrated by his persuasive arguments and factual presentation that Uddiyanapitha, where Vajrayana and Tantrayana flourished, was only in Odisha, and that King Indrabhuti of Sambhal was the current Sambalpur. The daughter-in-law of the Lanka Kingdom was the sister of Indrabhuti Laxmikara, and Paschim Lanka was only the contemporary city of Subarnapur (Sonapur). As an example, N.K. Sahu, S.N. Adhikari identified Lanka in Indonesia, S.N. Mehta in Australia (Sundar Kanda, 1941), V.H. Bader in the Maldives, Hormone Jekobi in Assam, Ray Bahadur Hiralal in Jabalpur, H.D. Sankhalaria in Amarakantak, Dwaraka Prasad Mishra in Andhra, and Hi However, after analysing the Sonapur Copper Plate inscription of the Somavamsi ruler Kumara Somesvara and the Mahada Copper Plate of the Telugu Choda King Somesvara Varman, Professor N.K. Sahu

endeavoured to identify Lanka. Even though N.K. Sahu's opinions on legendary Lanka may not be accurate, he did a remarkable job of bringing them up in a professional setting.

TRAVEL TO RUSSIA

As part of a cultural programme, N.K. Sahu travelled to Russia in 1975 AD. While there, he visited numerous historical sites and archaeological digs in Leningrad, Samarkand, and Dushan Bay. He had the opportunity to watch the Hissar hill archaeological dig.⁶⁰ The greatest honour of his life came when he had the good fortune to give a speech in Odia at one of the Russian universities. His talk was warmly appreciated.

LAST PART OF HIS LIFE

After leaving his position as vice chancellor at Sambalpur University, N.K. Sahu lived a life of complacency. He didn't have an obsession with wealth or power, but he committed his life to historical research, producing books, and journal publication. He was a creative genius who spent the majority of his life working to build western Odisha. He had fulfilled his obligation to his siblings and sisters as the family's first earner. His efforts enabled his younger brothers, Govinda Prasad Sahu to retire as the Joint Director of Agriculture, Krushna Chandra Sahu to become a Professor of I.I.T. Mumbai, and J.K. Sahu to become a historian and retire as a Reader in History. His siblings cherished and revered him up to his passing.⁶¹

N.K. Sahu took a secular stance. He was drawn to Buddhism while working at M.P.C. College, but after meeting Professor Kangali Charan Pati, he changed his allegiance to Sri Maa and Sri Aurobindo. He used to pray to Sree Maa before leaving the house. But in his later years, he stopped worshipping God and started using the idols of gods and goddesses as research materials. It was a huge honour for the multifaceted intellect to be appointed Advisor in the Department of Archaeology by the Government of Odisha after his retirement, and he held the position there until his death. He was working diligently to finish the book *Veer Surendra Sai*. On the idea of the previous Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Pattnaik, he also took on the responsibility of building a Mini Konark, however he was unsuccessful in doing so. N.K. Sahu had never in his life considered buying a piece of land, building his own home, or considering adopting a son. But near the conclusion of his professional life, he urged his younger brother J.K. Sahu to buy a plot of land for him. In Barpali, N.K. Sahu built a sizable structure on a block of land that his friend Nikunja Bihari Singh gave to him for free. That structure was known as Saraswati Bhawan in honour of his cherished wife. The Barpali College began operations in the home in 1973, remained there through 1986, and N.K. Sahu never requested rent from the school.⁶²

To conclude N. K. Sahu was genuinely humble. He spent his entire life conducting study, and as a result, he helped to shape Odishan historiography. He was one of the most renowned historians in Odisha, and both Odishan and Indian academics were known with his expert historical publications and all-encompassing friendship. Despite having a remarkable recall and intellect, he maintained his innocence and modesty. He possessed the virtues of a good human being and loved the people in his life.

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